



Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jerry Davis and I represent the Montana Bowhunters Association.

MBA opposes SB 397 because of the ramifications it will have on hunting, including bow hunting, wildlife management and public safety.

I will only name a few.

To begin this bill removes the FWP Commission's authority and flexibility in managing wildlife. Often restrictive harvest regulations for elk are not solely based on predator issues. Restrictive elk harvest may be because of environmental issues such as habitat loss or degradation caused by drought, fires, human development, or past liberal hunting seasons.

This bill allows for the use of motion tracking devices, something that is illegal during archery and big game seasons. Incidental use of such devices during archery and big game seasons will most likely lead to the unfair taking of big game.

This bill nullifies the hard work by legislators done earlier in this session to pass HB 73. A bill devised to control wolf populations without jeopardizing the relisting of wolves.

This bill allows bait to be used both in the spring and fall. In areas where grizzlies occupy the same territory as black bears there is a high probability that grizzlies will be lured to these baits. A grizzly will protect bait site which could lead to several negative scenarios. If a grizzly was lured into bait while a hunter was on stand and that bear would refuse to leave, it is conceivable that the hunter would consider that grizzly to be a threat and subsequently shoot it. We are sure that this scenario will be considered when the Federal Government considers delisting grizzlies in Montana. For this reason many of our members are concerned that bear baiting will threaten the delisting of the grizzly bear, a species many of us would love to have an opportunity to hunt.

Even if grizzlies that are lured into baits are not shot, it can be assumed that these bears will see the baits as free meal, much like the "garbage bears" of past. Baiting will most likely lead to a percentage of grizzly bears becoming habituated to bait. This will lead to a new generation of "garbage bears" a dangerous situation for hunters, private citizens, and grizzly bears.

Federal or State food storage orders are often if not always are in the same location where this bill proposes to allow bear baiting. Subsequently an individual who would be baiting bears legally under this proposed law would be performing an illegal act under existing orders. Does our legislature want to pass a law that may lead to some citizens to break an existing law? I don't think so.

The argument for this bill is that we need to have more aggressive predator control measures. Well we believe the FWP has taken a more aggressive but responsible approach to controlling predators.

In response to black bear predation problems FWP has expanded hunting season dates in the spring and added an archery only season in the fall. These actions have resulted in a 37% increase in harvested bears last year when compared to last 19 years.

In response to mountain lion predation concerns FWP has increased quotas and developed a hybrid season in Region 2. These actions have resulted in a 31% increase in mountain lion harvest during the 2011-12 season when compared to the 2008-2009 season.

I think it is clear that this bill is not needed for FWP and the Commission to take actions to control predators and in fact it has a potential to cause harm to the sensitive balance of ungulates and predators and the environment.

For these reasons and more we ask that you vote "Do Not Pass" for SB 397

Thank You,

SB 397

The brief summary below was assembled in response to public questions on recent changes to harvest management for Montana's large carnivores.

WOLF

Over the course of just three hunting seasons, Montana has evolved from a tightly regulated quota-based fall season with no trapping and a statewide quota of 75 to a general hunting and trapping season with no quota running through February 28 across most of the state. Statewide harvest has gone from 72 in 2009 to 225 for the 2012 season. Recent legislation further relaxed the hunting bag limit, allows electronic calls and relaxes the hunter orange requirement. At the same time, depredation response protocols for USDA Wildlife Services have been liberalized with greater latitude for that agency to lethally remove wolves in response to livestock losses.

BLACK BEAR

Recent expansions of hunting season dates in the spring, the addition of an archery only season in the fall and the removal of validation requirements in northwest Montana have resulted in increased harvest. From 1987 to 2006 the average statewide black bear harvest was approximately 1030. The 2012 statewide harvest was 1,416 black bears.

MOUNTAIN LIONS

Recent harvest liberalizations include increased quotas and the addition of a hybrid season in Region 2. Statewide harvest was 359 in 2008-09 and 470 in 2011-12.

Removal of commission authority.

Body condition ^{of elk} has been reduced and Bitterroot study indicates this may be a factor for lower calf

Baiting, Illegal where there food storage orders
High rate of ~~non~~ nontargeted Animals
related to wolf trapping in Idaho.